



Affordable Digital Marketing Strategies

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68 Powerful Shoestring Marketing Strategies For Your Small Business

Keyword research

At the foundation of any good SEO or PPC campaign is [keyword research](#). It shapes your content strategy, it lays the foundation for on site SEO, it drives your organic traffic and the icing on the cake is **it's completely free to do, if you want it to be.**

When conducting keyword research set your keywords into different categories such as:

- Brand
- Long tail
- Head

If you are a new small business then finding keywords that are “low hanging fruits” - low competition and decent search volume **with the potential for conversions** – should be your first targets. If you're a local business make sure to set your target area to your local region for accurate results.

Best Tools:

[Google Keyword Planner](#) – Google's own keyword research tool

[Ubersuggest](#) – A keyword research tool that provides many variations

[Wordtracker](#) – Reveals high performing keywords

Moz, SEMRush, Spyfu – Paid tools

On site SEO

Before you embark on your journey to first place rankings – oh the dream - **your on site SEO needs to be immaculate.** The scope of what you need to do goes beyond this article but includes

factors such as meta titles, headings, meta descriptions, internal linking, URL structures .. the list goes on!

In conjunction with keyword research, [on site SEO](#) sets the fundamental layer for further marketing strategies to get you ranking in search. It can also improve your quality score when you [set up your PPC campaign](#).

Best Tools:

[Google Webmaster Tools](#) – A free tool that provides suggestions for HTML improvements, crawl errors, links and schema

[Screaming Frog](#) – If you have a small site under 500 pages then this tool is free to use to scan your site for any on site errors

[Rank Easily SEO audit](#) – No list would be complete without our own SEO audit here at Rank Easily.

Sort out your 404 page

I've experienced so many different 404 pages I could write a whole blog post on the best and the worst. Note to self to do just that.

But really, this oft neglected page **holds the key to a better user experience** which leads to **better conversions and surprise, surprise, rankings**.

Although a flashy, graphic laden 404 page is nice what is more important is that on that page there are **navigational links to key pages on your website** to help lost users find their way. If you don't do this they are more likely to drop off the page to never return.

If you really want to go to town, add in a search box and find your bounce rate drop and more happy visitors singing your praises.

Place your NAP everywhere

NAP stands for **name, address and phone number**. It's your new stamp of approval around the web, so use it. First place to put this is of course your website, preferably your phone number in the header and your address in the footer. Placing it on your contact page is a no-brainer.

Business listings, off site content written by you and any **press releases** should also contain your NAP for an extra local SEO boost.

Company objective

If a business doesn't have a company objective it's the same as telling your potential customers you're not quite sure why you're providing them a product or service. Be bold, be proud and **get that objective slap bang on your homepage**. It will improve conversions as customers begin to

trust in what you do and where you're going. Even better if you can include a keyword you want to target.

Company story

Just like a company objective a company story creates a window into your company before a customer takes the step to purchase. To [tell a story that captivates your audience](#) is a true skill that once honed can reap amazing rewards. Introduce your employees on your about page, provide some personality about their likes and dislikes, their fears and dreams, **become personable**.

Explain the story of when your business was founded, its high .. and lows. We all know life isn't clean, crisp and linear but so many companies ignore the common touch that unites them with their customers.

Target Influencers

There are many way to go about this, but here's a few:

- 1) **Find writers and journalists who write for publications** you want to get featured on. Start commenting on their articles, add them on social media, reply sincerely to them on social with your own opinion to their opinions. Start engaging. Over several weeks or months begin to **introduce your content to them** and suggest it would be a great fit for the types of articles they write.
- 2) Credit goes to Ben Wynkoop for [this smart idea](#). Use **low cost twitter ads to target influencers with a unique piece of ego bait content**. It goes a little something like this, write a piece of content based around quotes of the influencer you want to target. Find the hashtags that influencer uses often. Promote it with Twitter ads targeting the hashtag and the local region where the influencer will be, i.e. at a conference or event.
- 3) If you're an ecommerce store, find the influential bloggers in your industry and **send your product out for review**. Let them know you'll share their review across your social media and they can keep the product. Extra bonus points if they provide a link to your product page.

Start a blog

This list of reasons why you should start a blog [is long](#). At it's core, a blog opens new doors to your website as it allows you to target numerous keywords per post that help you start ranking. Another key factor is that **updating your blog regularly provides freshness** that entices search spiders to crawl your site on a more regular basis which is great for search indexing and SEO.

The awesome guys at Buffer suggest the [optimal length of a blog post is 1600 words](#). Add to the fact that **74% of blog posts are read under 3 minutes and 94% under 6 minutes**. You want to make sure you're providing highly engaging, informative content **that doesn't bore the pants off people**.

Just think of every blog post as extended elevator pitch on a given topic. Stay to the point and make every word count.

Create a hubpages page

[Hubpages](#) is a blog based platform with a lot of rich informative content by it's users. You can join up and **create content for free**. This will help boost you as a thought leader and also provides natural relative links back to your website. It also provides a base to connect to other writers and readers within your industry for future collaborations.

Answer web user's questions

At the base of any good content strategy is finding the answers to customer's questions. Scour Q & A sites such as [Reddit](#), [Quora](#), [Yahoo Answers](#) and forums in your industry. Start writing informative in depth articles answering these questions. These can be answered in two ways: as a **piece of content written on your blog** but also answering questions **directly on the Q & A sites**.

If you can answer the most pressing problems in your industry with clear solutions that go above and beyond your competitors, you're onto a winner.

Write better content than your competitors

With tools such as [BuzzSumo](#) (free to try, paid for full features) and [I am on demand](#) (free) you can now start to understand on a grand scale which of your competitor's content is getting the most links and shares. This can then help guide you to formulate content that is better than theirs, also known as the [skyscraper technique](#).

Once you've written the content and it's published it's time to do [blogger outreach](#) to all the webmasters currently linking to your competitor's old content. **Suggest to them your content is ten times .. actually, let's say .. one hundred times better than theirs**. This method can be done again and again for as many pieces of content you want to target. Just make sure each piece of content you create is **longer, better researched** and with **outstanding design**.

Plan content around events

Open your calendar and **find all the special events coming up in the next 12 months**. Some obvious examples include Halloween and Mother's Day. But other more fruitful events may include an annual conference based around your industry, a local sporting event or charity drive. Start planning content based around these events.

The charms of timely content is that it has a **better chance of ranking higher quickly** and increased shares across social media. The more niche the event the better your chances.

Here's an example of timely content in action:

This includes a previous sports betting client of ours.

After the *FIFA 2014 World Cup* qualification draw we planned out a strategy of creating a page for each possible fixture after the qualifying stages and titled each page "Team X vs Team Y World Cup

2014 Preview”.

We added enough information about the teams and previous statistics to **publish prior to the fixture ever happening**. The pages began to rank well. They ranked even better once the fixtures became a reality.

At this point, we had information on the previous qualifying round fixtures to **add more content** to these already timely pieces, **providing even more freshness and higher rankings**.

The results were a **115% increase in visitors to the site** from these timely pieces of content, **thousands of new users** and a **social buzz** that had the content shared over and over for weeks leading up to the actual fixture.

Newsjacking

A bit like timely content except the planning is replaced with quick reaction times and a creative angle. Newsjacking allows any company to have their say on current affairs in real-time. **The key is to be quick yet informative**.

A few companies do newsjacking well .. a lot do them badly. A few rules when jacking the news:

- Stay away from disasters, upheavals and general suffering. AT&T anyone?
- If your brand doesn't fit the event. Don't force it. I'm looking at your Godiva.
- Find the primary source. This will add credibility to your story.

My favourite company for newsjacking is Paddypower. Although sometimes slightly risqué such as their “Good at sport? Climb aboard” campaign that jacks the controversial influx of immigrants through the euro tunnel into the UK. They also use major sporting events to their advantage such as this amusing “Traitor Tony” campaign that connected England vs. Italy at the World Cup. We all know someone like that, right?

Of course, these guys have larger than life marketing budgets but hopefully they help inspire you to **apply newsjacking on a smaller scale** through social media **with your own witty and creative thoughts**.

Evergreen content

The opposite of timely content is [evergreen content](#). This type of content is **written to stand the test of time**. It should provide, at the very least, basic informative content about a problem you can solve that won't go out of date.

Evergreen content tends to be the bookmarkable type, you know, the one you keep clicking back to in your browser bookmarks. We've all got a few of these we click back to for ideas.

Probably the most well known evergreen content on the web are pages from Wikipedia. For all the first place rankings they have cross search it goes to show that **evergreen content works**.

A few examples of evergreen content:

- How to guides
- White papers
- Lists
- Product Reviews
- Best Of's

Resource page

I love a good resource page. Sad, maybe, but hear me out. I genuinely believe they're a handy guide to the best information about a given topic. For complex industries like digital marketing I can't help but trawl resource pages for extra nuggets of information

You can do the same for your ecommerce or service website. Find the best of the best in your industry and list them in your own resources page.

- 1) Your **users will thank you that all their questions are answered** via your resources pages. This also saves time if you have a large customer base who ask the same types of questions. You can refer them to the resources page for further reading.
- 2) You can **include external resources** if you don't have time to write resources yourself. Reach out to the websites you've linked to and let them know how great their resource is and you'd love it if they'd share your resource page with their users.
- 3) **Find external resource pages** of those in your industry who link out to your competitor. Again, **reach out to them** and let them know you love their resource page and **let them know your resource page will benefit their users.**

Start a survey

First hand research has the potential for many shares and links as you will have created new data that others in your industry will feel obliged to link to within their content pieces.

A good place to start is [Survey Monkey](#) where the first 10 questions and 100 respondents is free. Another good resource, though paid, is [Google Surveys](#). The latter is especially good if you want to target consumer surveys.

The responses can be used in multiple ways. You can **turn the data into linkable assets** such as a **blog post, infographic or white paper**. Depending on your questions you can also find the data useful to shape your own content strategies and business objectives.

Add blog to aggregator blog sites

Get your blog known to the world with blog aggregator sites. It's free to submit your blog to [AllTop](#), [Blogrific](#), [Blog Catalog](#) and [Globe of Blogs](#). A blog aggregator site is also a good place to find other blogs in your industry where you can post content and also content ideas for your own blog.

Replace dead links in Wikipedia

Here's a little secret ... You don't have to be famous to be on Wikipedia. Really, you don't. Not only that, but getting a link from Wikipedia can be a simple process, if you know how.

We all know how powerful Wikipedia is. It dominates the search results and provides consistent references on anything and everything.

Finding places to put your link on Wikipedia

- 1) Use this search string in Google (replacing “keyword phrase” with a keyword of your choice: *site:wikipedia.org “Keyword phrase” “dead link”*)
- 2) On the Wikipedia page press Ctrl + F (or in the menu 'Find') and type in “dead link”
- 3) Find the dead link and copy the URL
- 4) Go to <http://waybackmachine.org/>, paste the URL and click search
- 5) Read the content and get to work writing content that is similar

Getting Your Link on Wikipedia

- 1) Create a free account on Wikipedia
- 2) Give it time, edit some other articles for the first few days
- 3) Then go and edit the dead link

Wah la! You have a link from Wikipedia (after the moderator's review), not bad, eh?

Link Out Link In

Leave no stone unturned. If you have linked out to another author, website or publisher then by all means let them know. You don't need to go begging for a link. Just inform them you liked them enough to link out to them and that you think your piece of content may fit their user base.

Create a content calendar

It sounds tedious but it doesn't have to be. A **content calendar keeps your content strategy in order** and allows you to balance out the types of content you are writing, why you are writing them and what you achieved from each piece. This then can **help you shape future strategy**.

What to include:

Pre

- Title of Article
- Keyword(s) To Target

- Word Count

Post

- Social Shares
- Rank for Keyword(s)
- Bounce Rate

Make sure to review data once per week.

Find best times to promote content

There is a ton of research on when are the [best times and days to post on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn](#). However, what a lot of research fails to mention is that posts **within different industries and relationships** (B2B marketing, [B2C marketing](#)) receive different response rates at different times and days. This individual dependant engagement rate means you should **find out yourself when the best times to post are**.

Quick Tip: Post one article several times throughout the week. Change the caption/status on each post each time you post and also the times of day you post (morning, afternoon, evening) and see if you receive a particularly good response rate with one of the status updates. Use this as a broad base for the type of headlines to write and when to post your most important content.

Use correct social media channels

With a limited budget and resources you will need to **choose the correct social media platform that suits your business model**. A shotgun approach to social media will likely leave your head spinning with great deal of frustration.

It's well known that **if your business is B2C then Facebook and Twitter is a must**, however if you're **B2B then LinkedIn is a great place** to kick off your social presence. On an industry by industry basis, **Pinterest is fantastic for promoting furniture, antiques and fashion**. While **Reddit is a superb place to promote electronic goods**, if done tactfully. They're a very picky bunch on there.

A lot of small businesses push social media to one side in the hope that somehow it will magically sprout followers, leads and sales. Unfortunately that isn't the case. Instead, it requires innovative strategies and daily [social media management](#). If you have little time **consider outsourcing your social media management at an affordable price** or at least set aside 30 minutes each day to post content and engage with your community.

Create and Join social communities

Google+

I can't say I use [Google+ communities](#) as much as I should but I do believe they're a **smart way to share interests on given topics**. Not only do you get to uncover new content for learning, sharing and discussing but it also connects you with other people with your interests. This is a primal way of connecting that really connects people.

As an example, I'm part of the [Internet Marketing community](#) on Google+ with over 151,000 members! As you can imagine, posting your content on there gets your brand in front of a lot of eyeballs. But like everything in life, it's a give and take game where you should comment and provide your opinions on other people's content too.

LinkedIn

[LinkedIn Groups](#) is a **brilliant way to build relationships, connections to third parties and leads to your business**. The best way to approach these groups is by first commenting on other members posts. Always remain sincere and provide your honest opinion. Then start posting your own content.

With communities and groups if there's a topic your knowledgeable about that has yet to be created, go do it! As the manager or host of a community you can get your company details in the about section for an added boost.

Facebook

A Facebook company page is different to a [Facebook Group](#). With a group you have the opportunity to **connect easier with people and mass message people within that group**. It allows members to post when they want for **better two-way connection**. This can be a great form of promotion if done correctly.

When creating a group **don't create the group about your brand**, self promotion may not get you many members and can backfire when members start posting irrelevant content in the group.

Instead, **create it around an interest that's related to your products or services**. For example if you sell jewellery consider creating a Facebook Group such as "Princess Jewellery Appreciation Society" where all posts are targeted on a specific interest.

Twitter

Getting on a user's [Twitter List](#) can be a pleasant feeling when that list contains the best of the best in your industry. Although you can't force yourself onto other people's Twitter lists, you can try. First, **start following other people's Twitter lists** that are related to your industry. Next, **add those experts in the list to your Twitter**. Thirdly, **get in touch with Twitter list curator**, comment on their posts, share it and let them know you'd be a good fit for their list.

Join hashtag conversations

There is an overwhelming amount of hashtags floating around the social media-sphere. The art is to **find the ones most relevant to you and your customers**. A good source includes [Chat Salad](#) or [Twubs](#) where you can find upcoming and existing hashtag conversations.

In the same vein, **Twitter hours are also excellent places to network**. These hour long conversations are based around a specific topic or area and can help you find new customers.

When getting involved with hashtag conversations follow some of these simple rules:

1. Be there to engage, learn and give advice.
2. Save self promotion until later in the convo, if at all.
3. Use .@ to show your messages in all news feeds.
4. Use the hashtag of the convo on all your responses
5. Build relationships after the hashtag convo has ended

Create an e-book

An e-book has become a popular method of stamping your authority on a particular topic. Although the cost of writing an e-book is only your time. **It will take some time to write.**

Here are just a few reasons to create an e-book:

- 1) Stamp your authority on a subject and become a thought leader
- 2) Use your e book as bait. Entice users to like your page or subscribe to your newsletter for a free e-book download.
- 3) A well written e-book can attract media attention and links to your website

If you have the time, start writing. As an added bonus **you can get links from e book directories including the mighty Amazon** and you can always sell your e book for passive income.

Create a shareable infographic

An infographic doesn't have to break the bank. If you don't have the design skills then outsourcing the design to freelancers on [Fiverr](#), [Upwork](#) or [Freelancer](#) can be cost effective.

Even if your design skills are not up to scratch there are easy to use programs that offer free styles (and paid styles) including [Piktochart](#) and [Canva](#) with What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) software.

According to Ahrefs, there are [3 ingredients to a viral infographic](#). Decent quality, shared in the correct places and emotive. A [study by Visual.ly of the best 30 infographics](#) suggests an infographic should contain:

The category

- Observational Humour
- Novel Insights
- How To
- Timely Issue

The Design

- Process Graph
- List Text
- Single Chart
- Timeline
- Repeated Chart
- Mixed Charts

Find questions to answer on Twitter

Tap into what your potential customers need help with and you're 75% of the way towards obtaining that customer.

Get on Twitter and type in “[industry] + help”, “[industry] + advice”, “[industry] + tips” replacing [industry] with your industry and find questions you can answer.

Make sure to follow up with people you've helped to see if they need further help.

Use logos on all listings and profiles

It amazes me how many business listings lack essential information about a company. Not only does including a logo make your business look more professional it will also increase click through and conversions to your website.

Find all the business listings and social media profiles you are currently on and make sure all your information is filled out including your logo.

Giveaway free promo items

This strategy works well if you're an ecommerce store with a new product line. You could create a post on Facebook, post and **ask your followers to comment and share for a chance to win** your product. **This increases the engagement rate.**

Your giveaway doesn't just have to be on Facebook. On Pinterest you could **create a Pin Board** and **ask your followers to post their most inspirational images**. Ask them to share the board and draw a winner.

If you are a service based business then a great budget giveaway is to **offer a low cost prize of a famous brand**. An obvious and overused example is the Apple iPod. The brand itself should garner enough attention at very little cost.

Get involved with charity

What better way to bag yourself some promotion and help people than with charity?

This could be local by **sponsoring a sports team for a small fee per year** or it could be **donating to a charity close to your heart** and asking the charity to feature your company as a benefactor on their website.

It doesn't all have to be about money though. Donating your time to a cause can also have superb benefits for your business and in the day and age of ethical business this is almost becoming a necessity.

Ask all customers for reviews

The [Google Pigeon algorithm update of 2014](#) changed the way local search results were ranked. The emphasis on legitimate business reviews has increased. Ask all your customers to leave positive reviews on your:

- Google My Business Page
- Facebook Page
- Business Directory Pages (Scoot, 192, etc.)

If you have a local store front make sure to **place a poster in the window requesting reviews**. If you are a direct mail company **add a request in all your parcels**. If you're a service make sure your **email correspondence provides a request** after the work is completed. Include links to the exact profiles you want reviews.

Decrease loading speed

Use the [PageSpeed Insights tool](#) to find out how quickly your website loads on desktop and mobile. If you run your website on Wordpress there are several free plugins that can help speed up your website. They include [Above The Fold Optimization](#), [Gzip Speed Ninja Compression](#), [JCH Optimize](#) and [Leverage Browser Caching Ninjas](#).

For reducing the size of images on your Wordpress site try [WP Smush](#). This plugin automatically reduces the file size of images.

We've used all these speed plugins for Rank Easily with excellent results. Desktop loading increased by over 43% and mobile loading speeds by over 37% and our rankings for the homepage increased because of it.

Make sure your site is mobile friendly

Is your website mobile friendly? You can [check here for free](#).

According to a [Smart Insights study](#) mobile media time in the US is now greater than desktop, 51% for mobile compared to 42% for desktop. This is only expected to increase and it goes without saying that making sure your website is mobile friendly should be high up in your priorities.

You'll know if your website is mobile friendly because Google have started placing tags under the titles of SERP placements as you can see here.

Connect Google Analytics

An often overlooked tool for busy small businesses, [Google Analytics](#) provides free analysis of your website including the amount of visitors, visitor demographics, bounce rates, conversions, landing pages, exit pages, time on page and time on site, to name a few!

To connect your Google Analytics you should have a Gmail address and then sign up [here](#).

When you're in the console click **“Admin”** under the Property column click **“Tracking Info”** > **“Tracking Code”**.

Copy the code provided. If you're on Wordpress **paste into the header.php section** of your website after the **<head> tag** and before the **</head> tag**.

Give it a couple days before you see data in your Analytics console.

Use Webmaster Tools

There are several webmaster tools that are completely free and worth using.

[Google Webmaster Tools](#).

[Bing Webmaster Tools](#).

[Yandex Webmaster Tools](#).

They all help you find health problems with your website including crawl and HTML errors, structured markup, sitemap verification, sitelinks and penalty violations.

Add schema

Schema is a new language used by search engines to better understand your webpages. There are [different types of schema](#) you can use depending on the content on your website. Some of the more popular schema include:

Local Business: Markup your contact page address, phone number and even your logo.

Review: If you have external reviews on websites such as TrustPilot you can add these reviews to your website and mark them up with the appropriate schema.

Product: If you're selling a product they can be marked up with name, model, height, price, etc.

This schema then shows up in search results as you can see below.

This can really help with trust increasing the click-through-rates (CTR) which is [a possible ranking signal](#).

A/B Test

Put simply, an A/B Test compares data from two different webpages with the same aim. The A/B test is an important – though oft neglected – part of [conversion rate optimisation](#).

When you create a new webpage consider all the possible alternatives. Could the sign up form be on the left hand side instead of the right? How about the call to action button above the fold? Would using a more enticing page title drive higher click through?

The list of which variables to change is solely up to you and your goals.

A/B Test Tips:

- Give your self time for a **thorough sample size**. If you don't have many visitors yet this will

- be longer than if you have many.
- **Test the control and the variable page at the same time.** Doing otherwise would not be a valid test.
 - **The data doesn't lie.** You may not like the new style of the page but if it will improve your goals then you'd be advised to go with it.

Read more about A/B Testing:

[A/B Testing Explained by Wikipedia](#)
[Lingerie Company A/B Tests Their Images](#)
[The Ultimate Guide To A/B Testing](#)

Affiliate marketing

A sometimes cheaper alternative to the Google AdWords PPC model is affiliate marketing. At it's core affiliates sell your product or service on their blog or website and take a cut of the commission when somebody clicks through from their link and purchases.

Affiliate marketing tips:

Be choosy of your affiliates. If they're also an affiliate for your competitors is it in your best interests?

Find out the writing or presentation style of your affiliate. If they help and inform more than hard sell then you may achieve better conversions.

Always track your affiliates leads. This can give you solid data to make sound decision on where to put place your marketing budget in future.

Find link opportunities using search strings

Did you know you can type specific commands into Google? Here are a select few examples:

Keyword + "intitle:resources"
Keyword + "recommended sites"/"suggested sites"
Keyword + "top 10 articles"/ "top articles"

You can replace the keyword with the keyword you want to target. These search parameter commands will show you websites that are talking about other articles, websites and resource in your industry. All you have to do is reach out the webmasters of these sites with your own helpful articles or resources and ask to be added.

This method is very effective. All it takes if your time and some stellar content on your behalf.

Guerilla marketing

The use of guerilla marketing is increasing. What makes this so effective is that out of the box

thinking with a low budget can produce amazing results.

Here are a few examples of Guerilla marketing:

- 1) Airbnb [leveraged the use of craigslist](#) through its API to advertise it's rentals. - **Difficulty: Hard**
- 2) Placing your record shop business card inside every DJ'ing for Dummies book throughout all your local bookshops – **Difficulty: Medium**
- 3) Writing your car wash brand name and phone number on the dust of a dirty car – **Difficulty: Easy**

The charming thing about guerilla marketing is that the possibilities are endless and the cost usually low. All it takes is your imagination and some get up and go.

Get local

If you have a local shop or office then it's in your best interests use a [local SEO service](#) to drive local leads.

I wrote a blog post last month aimed at [local SEO for plumbers](#). Some of the ideas in that blog post are universal and can be applied to your business.

There are many factors that go into a well optimised business for Local SEO. These are some of the main ones:

- Create a Google My Business page (and link to your website)
- Add yourself to all the top national, local and niche business listings
- Make sure your name, address and phone number (NAP) are consistent across listings
- Add your NAP to your website
- Add your NAP to content you write for external websites
- Generate reviews both on your site and on review websites
- Add the local area to your meta titles, descriptions and headings
- Create unique descriptions for every business listing

Analyse your competitors

When we work with clients we always recommend [SEO competitor analysis](#) as a strong starting point to understanding the time it may take to outrank a set of competitors. The types of analysis include:

Backlink analysis. Discovering who is linking to your competitors, the amount of unique domains, domain authority, no follow and do follow links and where on a page the links are coming from.

Backlink analysis on a budget: [Monitor Backlinks](#) offer one free search per week of any website.

Keyword analysis. This includes understanding all the keywords a competitor is ranking for, the cost per click (if using AdWords) and search volume.

Keyword analysis on a budget: The free keyword research tool, Google Keyword Planner, allows you to type in a competitor's landing page and the tool will throw up all the keywords connected to

that page.

UX analysis. Do you think your website is perfect? Even the most visited places on the web are far from it. User Experience (UX) is becoming more and more important especially with the use of mobile.

UX analysis on a budget: Gather all your competitors websites and spend half a day using them. From the homepage, to the blog, to the checkout. Use it all. If there's anything that stands out both good or bad, make a note and be sure to apply to your website.

Unique product descriptions

Through my experience as a digital marketer I've consulted on ecommerce stores both large and small. There is usually one thing that is fairly common between those that are not ranking as well as they could be – **duplicate product descriptions**.

The fact of the matter is if you have product descriptions on your store that are copied from the manufacturer's website or from Amazon or any other store, **you need to make your product descriptions unique ASAP**.

Yes, this is time consuming. But the time spent doing this WILL increase your rankings and ultimately your sales. Check out what our affordable [ecommerce product descriptions service](#) has to offer.

Build an email list

There are two main ways you can go about building an email list to send your newsletters out to.

- A static sign up form on your page/sidebar/footer/header/end of blog post
- A pop-up capture form

There is no harm in implementing both of these. **But you must do it tactfully.**

Pop-Ups are Bad!

A study conducted by Gartner G2 states that 78% of respondents found pop-up ads “annoying”.

Pop-Ups are Good!

A case study of this digital photography blogger showed that using a [pop up effectively increased sign up rates](#) by over 775% compared to a static sidebar.

If using a pop up follow these tips:

Time the pop-up to open after a set time. According to [this study](#) you should show your pop up after at least 5 seconds.

Time the pop-up to open after several page views. Ideally on the second page.

Design the pop up to contrast. It should stand out from the page with a strong call-to-action (CTA).

Best email capture and management tool: [Mailchimp](#) – Customisable pop-ups and free up to 2000

email subscribers.

Stay up to date with algorithm changes

Knowing which algorithm updates are occurring can help you understand fluctuations in visitors at a set point in time.

There are four key Google algorithms that you should be aware of:

- Panda – On site factors ([Read the ultimate Panda recovery guide](#))
- Penguin – Backlink factors
- Pigeon – Local SEO factors
- Hummingbird – Conversational search factors

One of the best resources for keeping track is [Moz's Google Algorithm Change](#) page that lists out every change since the introduction of the Google search engine.

As part of our [penalty recovery service](#) at Rank Easily we investigate visitors drops (and increases) with algorithm changes to pinpoint potential issues with a website.

Join HARO

HARO stands for [Help a Reporter Out](#). It's a service that matches journalists with businesses, thought leaders and experts many different industries.

It's free to sign up to their email list and they send out regular newsletters to their subscribers with journalists looking for interviews, studies and reports.

It's a great way to build up relationships with journalists and get your name or brand mentioned in high profile media publications.

Guest post

Guest posting is still an excellent form of acquiring relevant links to your site.

Find all the blogs related to your industry – that are not direct competitors – and begin to reach out to them via email.

It's important that when you are applying [blogger outreach](#) that you **warm up your potential contacts first**.

How do you do this?

Add the owners of the blog to your social media and start sharing their content and commenting on their posts.

Sending the first email.

When sending the first email don't just dive in for the kill with demands of writing on their blog.

Instead use an email template such as this:

Hi [THEIR FIRST NAME]

My name is [YOUR NAME] from [YOUR COMPANY]. I really enjoy reading [NAME OF THEIR BLOG] and have share a lot of your blog posts across my social media. I especially like [NAME OF THEIR BLOG POST + URL] and found it to help me because [LIST A FEW SINCERE REASONS WHY THE POST HELPED YOU].

I've written an article that I have yet to publish but thought it would fit your blog audience even better. It's called [TOPIC OF BLOG POST].

I'd be happy to send this over to you for review, if you are interested?

Kind regards
[YOUR FULL NAME]

Sending the second email

Hopefully you receive a reply. If you haven't received a response always send a follow up email after 3 days.

If you do receive a positive response send the article over and make sure to ask them to confirm they have received it and whether they liked it.

Also make sure you haven't posted it anywhere else as this could trigger duplicate content issues.

Let them know once the article is published you will be sharing it with all your social media followers. This provides further incentive on their behalf to publish the article.

The great thing about blogger outreach is that once you have a relationship with a particular publisher you have a higher chance of permission for posting there in future.

Comment on related blog posts

There are a few main reasons why commenting on blog posts is still effective promotion for your business.

- 1) It **builds relationship with the author** for future guest posting or other joint ventures
- 2) Placing a comment usually **allows you to link to your blog**
- 3) Thoughtful comments can **boost your profile as a thought leader**

When commenting really read the article and **formulate some questions to ask the author**. Build upon their knowledge with your own and if you have an article that relates, by all means post the link after your comment.

Some of the best blog post comments provide an **insightful, sometimes funny, counter-argument** to what has been written.

A couple good articles on writing killer blog comments:

[How To Write a Good Blog Comment by Natahan Bransford](#)
[How To Write a Great Blog Comment by Grammar Girl](#)

Host a webinar

A webinar is a handy way to get your customers, subscribers or potential leads to come together via video conferencing.

By utilising a webinar you can share your knowledge to help and guide users which in turn should lead to more sales and repeat customers.

There are different ways about conducting a webinar. By far the cheapest and most popular option is [Google Hangouts](#). Other strong options include [AnyMeeting](#) (14 day free trial) and [ClickWebinar](#) (30 day free trial).

A few webinar ideas:

- How to use on a product or service
- Q&A session
- Exclusive preview of a product

When preparing your webinar be sure to:

- Contact everybody on your mailing list
- Create a blog post about the event
- Create a dedicated landing page about the event
- Promote across all social media channels
- Create a hashtag for the webinar

And most of all ... don't stress! Your first webinar will probably have a fair amount of glitches and attendances may not be as strong as you hoped.

But persevere.

The **more webinars you conduct the greater chance of building sustaining relationships** with customers, getting your brand noticed and building valuable links to your business.

Video is the new king

If you're not sure about the effectiveness of using video to boost your SEO then just check out [this case study](#). They created 4 video blogs per week with production time under 30 minutes each.

Total cost? The **princely sum of \$219!**

The results? Over a 6 month period the **best 5 videos accounted for a 60% increase in organic traffic.**

Not too bad, not too bad at all.

At it's most a basic a computer with video capture capabilities, Google Hangouts and a smile is all it takes to produce your first v-log or how to video.

There are many reasons why you may want to start video content but I'll list a few anyway:

- Increase visitors
- Brand awareness
- Build a following
- Ability to transcribe video into words for SEO
- Videos rank high in Google

The last one I can't emphasise enough. **Videos rank really high.**

Even in competitive search verticals with competitive keywords I've seen videos rank on the first page for SMBs. Their engaging engaging video hit the correct keywords and was uploaded across the main video websites (YouTube, Vimeo, MetaCafe) to rank well.

Create a presentation

Something very strange happens in the search engines when you create a presentation (especially on [SlideShare](#)) .. your presentation tends to rank well for the keywords it targets!

One of the reasons for this is that **SlideShare is probably one of the least manipulated and overused document sharing platforms.** This provides ample room for your presentations to rank well.

Another positive is that a presentation covers a lot of bases including SEO, link building, brand awareness and social engagement.

You can save time by converting a blog post into a presentation. Share your presentation across your social media and even post the link to your presentation in blog comments, forum threads your own blog posts.

Start a podcast

I've recently started to understand and appreciate the humble podcast a lot more. Apart from industry shows such as [This Old Marketing Podcast](#) and the [Digital Marketing Podcast](#). I had a barrel of laughs listening to the [Ricky Gervais podcast series](#).

Sure, I'm still probably behind the curve on this subject but I can see the value in podcasting for **brand awareness, customer retention/acquisition** and even **SEO**.

It's very cheap to start your own podcast, all you need is a computer, a microphone and free podcast recording software such as [Audacity](#). I do recommend you go one step above though. Choose a headset with noise cancellation to sound as professional as possible.

A few podcast content ideas that may pique your interest:

Interview with an expert. A superb way to connect with those in our industry is to invite them onto your podcast. They get exposure and a link to their site in the synopsis and you hopefully get your podcast shared by their followers.

Weekly roundups. Talk about the weekly news in your industry and give shout outs to businesses that have stood out for one reason or another. Let them know you mentioned them and ask them to share the podcast.

Expert debate. Invite a panel of experts to join you over conference call to discuss the most recent trends in your industry.

Round-ups

This can be daily, weekly, monthly or even annually. A round up is a content curation technique that best of the best (experts, content, news, etc.) on a particular topic.

Make sure you're subscribed to every blog in your industry you can do this via [Feedly](#), [Google Alerts](#) or [IFTT](#).

Other places to find content:

- Other Round-ups
- Twitter Lists
- Reddit sub pages
- Digg
- Google+ Communities
- LinkedIn Groups

When creating round-ups always cite your sources and try to add your own personal opinion on each article in the round-up. Don't forget to promote your round-ups and let everybody who is mentioned curated in your round-up you have mentioned them for some extra backlinks and engagement.

Share email lists

While you should be using best practice to build your newsletter subscribers such as opt-in forms and well timed pop-ups. Another strong way of getting new leads is to share subscriber lists with other businesses in your industry **who are not direct competitors** but have potential customers who **may be interested in your product or service**.

When obtaining a new subscriber list it is always best for the business you have obtained them from to let their subscribers know you will be emailing and that they have the option to opt out.

A few examples of shared subscriber lists could be:

- Web design company sharing with a digital marketing company
- Car retailer sharing with a car insurance company
- Hairdresser sharing with a nail technician

Go offline

I don't mean forever, of course. But getting involved with your local community can grab you attention online.

You could host a community event that fundraises for a local cause, connect local experts in a conference, or provide a seminar about your services or products.

Whatever you do **make sure to take plenty of photos** and get somebody to video and annotate what happens at the community event. You can use all this media on your website as a blog post and also turn into a press release.

You'll be surprised by how much attention you can grab that **translates to online leads**.

Leaflet distribution

Ah, the mighty leaflet. Your own letter box is probably inundated with these as we speak. To the more cynical of you out there you're probably asking **how do leaflets ever work?** And more to the point **how do they work to pull in online customers?**

The answer is simple and effective. Create a flyer that prominently includes your web address, email and ... here's the cherry on the top – an incentive for those who receive your flyer jump online and buy from you!

For the real tech savvy out there, you could even place on a Quick Response (QR) code that when scanned provides access to your website, contact information or even a coupon. If you're interested in creating your own QR code then [Kaywa has a free resource](#).

Speak at or host an event

For some, the thought of speaking at an event is daunting. However, speaking or hosting at an event can do wonders for your marketing both on and offline.

According to an [Eventbrite study](#), 43% of businesses partake in events to network and build relationships, generate a profit (36%), build brand awareness (32%) education or training (30%) and lead generation (18%).

As you can see, **the aims of talking to an audience are wide and varied**. Here are a few tips for the big day:

If you're also hosting or speaking at an event

- Post the event on **social conference directories** such as [Lanyrd](#) and [Meetup](#).
- Create an event page on your website with opt in form.
- Write a press release.
- Share with your social media followers.
- Run a **low cost social ads targeted locally**.
- Consider adding in **workshops, seminars and training sessions**.
- Don't go overboard with the invites but make sure you have enough (between 15 – 100 people is ideal).
- Request **attendees to tweet the event hashtag** during the event.
- After the event ask attendees to **drop a review on your Google+ page**.

Offer a free consultation or audit

If you take a look above the fold of our homepage at Rank Easily we offer a [free SEO audit](#) for all visitors.

This type of offering is a **great way to build a newsletter subscriber base and nurture new leads**.

This method is not new or revolutionary but, and this is a big but, I notice not enough service businesses offering it. As part of our conversion rate optimisation process for our service based clients overall we've found, on average, a **350% up-tick in conversions after implementing a consultation/audit form**.

If you're on Wordpress the free [Contact Form 7 plugin](#) will seamlessly send all inquiries to an email of your choice.

Monitor your brand mentions

As your brand grows in popularity so will the amount the mentions across the web. Using free tools such as [Google Alerts](#) will allow you to receive daily updates to your inbox or [Social Mention](#) for on-the-fly searches across social media.

When you find mentions of your brand check to see if they link back to you. If they don't, then send a polite request that they do and **thank them for mentioning your business** in the first place.

Join online forums

Online forums split opinion. On the one hand they're useful communities with an abundance of information on a topic and on the other they're ancient properties best left to [neckbeards](#), [internet trolls](#) and [keyboard warriors](#).

Although many online forums contain some of these latter “personalities” the usefulness of forums for boosting your business cannot be dismissed.

When targeting forums make sure you **become part of the community first** before you start promoting your brand, products or service. Forums are built on trust and sincerity and if you don't build rapport first you may well [get flamed](#) by others in the community which can be detrimental to your brand.

You should also be **offering advice to those who need it**. This sort of altruism is the lifeblood of online forums and tends to repay itself over time.

We have a client in the functional fitness industry that uses forums effectively offering advice on topics such as which footwear or grips are best to use for CrossFit, among other topics. However, due to the use of the body and contentious use of the brand name CrossFit the answers to these questions must be scientifically based with extensive research. A step wrong and the community will come down on the brand like a ton of bricks.

The moral of the story when using online forums is to **always strive to be the main thought leader** in your industry, be sincere, honest and helpful and you'll be way on your way to getting the best out of forums with potentially high sales conversions.

Fix links on other websites

A link building technique that never seems to die is the broken link building method. In a nutshell, the aim is to **find broken links on another website, inform them of the broken link and provide them a replacement link** (a page on your website or a page purposefully created to replace the missing content).

Although [this blog post from Moz](#) explains it, it is slightly long winded for most small business on a budget to follow. Instead I recommend this simple method:

- 1) Install [Screaming Frog](#) – This freemium software scans all internal and external links of a website
- 2) **Find websites you want a link from**. You can use search engine parameters for in depth searches. For example if you're an engineering consultant you could search Google with “engineering consultant resources”, “intitle: engineering consultants” or “recommended engineering websites”
- 3) **Make a list of all the broken links** and their corresponding websites and contact details of the site owners
- 4) Go to the [waybackmachine](#) type in the broken link and find the previous content of the broken link
- 5) **Re-write the content** and if possible add new up dated information
- 6) **Contact the site owners**. Let them know about the broken link and how your content is a much better replacement.
- 7) Enjoy the new links!

This is a labour intensive process so if you have no spare staff on hand this is one to consider when you do as it's also a classic link acquisition method that works.

Extend domain registration

Matt Cutts, former head of Google's webspam team implied in one of his [question and answer video](#)

[sessions on YouTube](#) that extending the domain registration of a website has at least a slight impact on rankings. Also a [new study out by Moz](#) investigating major ranking factors in 2015 suggests there is a minor **positive correlation between extending domain registration and ranking higher in search.**

That said, you must weigh up if paying to extend your domain registration is worth that slight impact in rankings. If you're planning to be around for years to come it probably makes sense to extend your domain now.

Leave testimonials on third party sites

I bet you've got at least a few third parties you rely on on a daily basis to keep your business running.

Think:

- Which software do you use for customer relationship management (CRM)?
- Which software do you use to handle invoices and accounts?
- Which CMS do you use?
- Who are your suppliers?

The tactic of reaching out to these companies and letting them know how much their software, products or tools have helped is **a form ego-bait that can work wonders on getting you links** from around the web.

Write a sparkling review and send it off to them. Bonus points if you can also send your logo and photos of your team in action using the software or supplies.

Create an email signature

I think we've all experienced that email signature that's ten pages long with a multitude of fonts, a logo the size of Africa and links to ALL their social profiles including MySpace.

Here's my quick rundown on best practice for email signatures.

Include:

- Small logo
- Name of your business
- Business objective
- Web address
- Link to your LinkedIn profile
- Phone number
- Email address

That's it. **No more than that is needed.**

The idea is to have a signature in all your emails to attract more visitors to your website and social profiles and also **build trust with those you are engaging with.** If you haven't created an email

signature, do it now.

Use all free ad credits

Try to pounce on opportunities when offered to advertise for free. Not only can this drive more sales but the data you receive from your PPC campaigns can go towards your own organic SEO efforts.

Bing offer a £50 free ad coupon (one per account) for anyone who signs up to Bing Ads. You can [get that offer here](#).

When you create a new Gmail address and sign up for Google AdWords they may send you a coupon for free ad credit. The last one I received was for \$75 free credit after spending \$25.

Repurpose content

Think of your content like a chameleon. The more it changes the more successful it is at staying alive.

By this I mean when you create a piece of content, say, a written blog piece you can convert that into a PDF, slide share presentation, podcast, meme, ebook, whitepaper, webinar, video or an infographic. All these methods **can then be shared on different platforms** and to new audience boosting the amount of inbound links to your site.

The effectiveness of re purposing content is **the ability to cross channel promote and engage more users** who digest content in different ways.

A few examples of repurposing your content:

- 1) **Turn your long how to blog post into an ebook.** I'm going to do just that with this blog post which will hopefully garner more social shares and links.
- 2) **Gather your internal data and turn into an infographic.** Your primary research will become an extremely linkable asset and it will look sexy too. Infographics when designed correctly can be very sexy.
- 3) **Convert your webinar into a YouTube video.** This will extend your thought leadership and help customers who may have missed your webinar.

Interview industry experts

Interviewing prominent experts in your industry will help you **build long lasting relationships, boost your own exposure and develop your thought leadership.** You can find lists of experts in social media communities, Twitter lists, blogs, round ups and industry events. Even better if you can find experts who have recently published a book, created a piece of software or done something noteworthy that they would like to promote.

When planning out interviews with experts consider:

- **If they are new interviewees introduce yourself.** Explain how you appreciate their thoughts and that you would love their opinion.
- **Most people are quite busy.** Ask between 1-3 questions and lay out to those you are interviewing that you require only a set amount of words as a response.
- After you have posted the interviews **share it and ask the interviewees to share it too.**

This doesn't just have to be in written form either. You could also interview experts on webinars, videos and podcasts to further branch out your reach.

Create a white paper

If you're B2B then creating a white paper could be an effective way to gain clients.

Learn more [about the structure of a white paper](#) and how with time and the correct thought leader to write it you could **create an evergreen resource** that all those in your industry will refer to.

A solid white paper will be **full of facts, figures, primary and secondary research and statistics.**

It should also contain **long copy with plenty of diagrams and charts.**

Some of the advantages of a white paper include:

- The ability to repurpose current content both on your site and others into a new form.
- Build connections by asking experts to leave a quote/comment/idea/research in the white paper.
- Use the white paper as downloadable link bait. If a visitor wants the the white paper they must input their name and email which provides you with a new lead.

Offer a small scholarship / funding / sponsorship

There are plenty of universities and colleges that would love to promote your scholarship to their students. The art is to **find the correct department** and reach out in order to offer your scholarship.

The cost of the funding doesn't have to be much but check with each school if they have specific requirements. From our past experience using student scholarships as a form of marketing **we've been able to gather a lot of inbound .ac.uk and .edu links.**

These types of authoritative links to your website can really help with both balancing your link profile and boosting [domain authority](#). This in turn will **help you rank higher for more competitive keywords.**

You can find a lot of scholarships using search strings such as (this is the British version just replace .ac.uk with .edu for North American version):

- site:.ac.uk “scholarships”
- site:.ac.uk “outside agency scholarships”
- site:.ac.uk “keyword + scholarships”

Make sure to create a scholarship page on your website, create a competition (somebody has to win the scholarship, right?) and get social buzz into lift off with regular updates.